(c) whether it is a fact that fairly a large number of families make use of more than only one LPG card if so, the number of such cases; and

(d) by when, such number of LPG connections will be released to match the number of families in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) As on 1-4-2002,635 lakh customers are served by Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies through their LPG distributors.

(c) As per instructions, one family is entitled for one LPG connection only.

(d) At present, LPG connections are available on demand all ever the country in all the markets.

Bids under New Exploration Licensing Policy

90. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be plesed to state :

(a) whether Government have invited bids for exploration of oil and gas under the New Exploration Licensing Policy;

(b) if so, the locations for which the bids have been invited, State-wise;

(c) the last date of receiving bids; and

(d) the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR) : (a) to (d) To intensify efforts for exploration of oil and gas in the country, Government, under the third round of New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP), have offered 27 exploration blocks under the International Competitive Bidding (ICB). These include 11 onland blocks falling in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland Rajasthan, Triupura and West Bengal, 9 Deep Water blocks and 7 shallow water blocks, located on both East and West Coasts. The Notice Inviting

Offers for these blocks was announced on the 28th March, 2002 with the bid closing date of 28th August, 2002.

Increase in prices of petrol and diesel

91. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Government announced a rise in the prices of petrol and diesel last month;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor,

(c) whether it is also a fact that Government have permitted the oil companies to revise the prices of petrol and diesel every fortnight and if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) whether relief is proposed to be given to common man adversely affected by this burden of price hike?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR) : (a) to (c) With the dismantling of Administered Pricing Mechanism effective 1st April, 2002, the prices of petrol and diesel have become market-determined. Keeping in view the increase in the international oil prices, the oil companies decided to first increase the retail selling price of petrol and diesel by around Rs. 2.50 litre and Rs. 1.50 litre respectively from the midnight of 3rd/4th June 2002 and later, by around 25 paise per litre for each product with effect from 16th June 2002.

(d) With a view to contain the impact of the increase in international prices on the domestic consumer prices of petrol and diesel, the Government reduced the excise duty rates on these products by 2% with effect from the midnight of 3rd/4th June 2002.

Maintenance of price of petro-products

92. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state the steps taken to prevent hardship to the consumers of petro-products by maintaining price stability for the post administered pricing mechanism environment ?